

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE
PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT SOCHI
ON 18TH SEPTEMBER, 1970

Question : (Translated) It relates to the second anniversary, last August, of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries. How do you see these last two years from the point of view of the development of relations between the Soviet Union and Singapore?

Prime Minister: I think we are consolidating our appreciation of each other and we are trying very hard to get a good team to send to Moscow to open our embassy there.

Question: (Translated) Sir, then as we say, a long distance is no impediment to friendship?

Prime Minister: I am told that it's always easier to be friends when you are not immediate neighbours, and therefore we ought to be very good friends indeed, because there are many intervening countries.

Question : My next question is : What part in our relations do you think could be played by the development of broader, more extensive relations in the economic, cultural and other spheres between the two countries.

Prime Minister: That's a very large and wide spectrum. I would think we ought to be able to learn a lot from the Soviet Union in the fields of science and technology. The first step would be to have a special school, in which our students can learn Russian, because otherwise it's an awful waste of time coming here to learn Russian first, and then learn the subjects. There's one aspect of your high technology products which has struck me, which is relevant to developing countries or countries that want to develop quickly, namely, you go for the essentials and ignore the frills. I think countries which want to develop quickly ought to take that point.

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Question: Singapore acquired its independence 5 years ago. In this connection, may I ask what tasks have already been resolved in your country and what are the immediate problems to be resolved in the near future?

Prime Minister: Well, the first task was to make ourselves economically viable. We are fortunately on the way towards achieving that. And if we can achieve the same rate of growth in the next five years as in the last five, then the future should be reasonably secure.

The second point is the problem of being exposed to deleterious influences, particularly from the "hippie" culture which is spreading across the jet - routes. We are a very exposed society, having both an important air and sea junction, and the insidious penetration of songs, TV, skits, films, magazines all tending towards escapism and the taking of drugs, is a very dangerous threat to our young. We will have to be not only very firm in damping or wiping out such limitation, but also to try and inoculate our young people against such tendencies. It is a malady which has afflicted

several of the big capitals in the West and would destroy us if it got a grip on Singapore.

Question : We just heard you commenting on your impressions about your visit to the Soviet Union. We just heard and saw you on TV screen, but since we have readers of our paper in many countries of the world, would you mind repeating or enlarging on what you said about your impressions of the visit for the benefit of our readers, especially those in Afro - Asian countries?

Prime Minister: Well, it's a lesson I think for all the people who want to develop. The speed of development is correlated to the intensity of the effort put in . Many countries have been sorely disappointed, because they have discovered that just talking about development do not bring it about. Aid and trade are useful props, but the propulsion must come from within one's own people – the organisation, the energy, the drive, the discipline and the effort.

I think one of my most vivid impressions in my life was flying over the Soviet Union, from Bangkok to Moscow in January last year. The ground beneath me was all ice and solid cold, and despite the very harsh conditions, as the plane come down I could see people working, building and constructing. So, if people work hard on a project which has been planned properly, then they are likely to make progress. Then if they are all well organised, the extra aid and trade can help speed up the progress.

I believe that many countries in the world believe that just by calling themselves socialist or communist means progress. But that is not so. One has got to work, that is the beginning of progress.

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Question: Another question if I may. In Moscow and here, you have been meeting with the Soviet leaders. How do you assess the results of the talks you have been having?

Prime Minister: I do not believe it's possible in formal or diplomatic exchanges to get the same meeting of minds. The face to face discussion has given me an opportunity to get the feel of thinking. I found in your Prime Minister, Mr. Kosygin, very quiet - spoken, but a very determined mind of great ability and application. So in spite of his many other duties and interest, I was agreeably surprised to find that he knew a lot about Southeast Asia and was keen to know more about it. I hope, in elucidating the subject, he also get to understand what kind of people we are.

Question : You spoke of your personal impressions of our Prime Minister. Did you also find some measure of understanding in your talks with him, as relating to the future economic development of Singapore, for instance?

Prime Minister: I found a broad grasp of the problems of the area, and in order to have economic and social development, there must be political stability in the region. If an area is engulfed by war and troubles, like South Vietnam, it's very difficult to

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make economic or social progress. The important thing is to avoid getting such a situation to spread in the area.

Question: And my last question. What would you like to say to the Soviet people who have been very happy to receive you in their country.

Prime Minister: I would like to express my thanks for the hospitality and kindness with which I have been received, and for this opportunity to get a flavour of Soviet life.

Life means change, and in the eight years, since 1962, I have found many changes in Moscow, not only in the physical landscape, but also in the people. And it's an important part of my education to know how people and countries are moving.

Thank you.